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**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

Applicant : Hiroshi IIZUKA et al.  
Serial No. : 09/908,993  
Filed : July 19, 2001  
For : **WATER SOFTENING DEVICE**  
Examiner : Not assigned  
Art Unit : 1724  
Docket No. : M1953-35

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Date

By

Signature

*Jan 31, 2002*

Margaret L Goldstein

*M.L. Goldstein*

Hon. Commissioner for Patents  
Washington, D.C. 20231

**INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

SIR:

In accordance with 37 C.F.R. §1.56, applicants wish to call the attention of the Examiner to the information identified in the attached form PTO-1449. A copy of the related art references are enclosed.

The concise explanation of relevance of the non-English language references is found in the translations of the abstracts of the Japanese references. See MPEP §609 A(3). Complete copies of the references are not within the position or control of Applicants.

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A concise explanation of the relevance of the remaining references is additionally found within the European Patent Office Search Report. See MPEP §609.

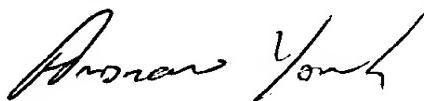
Applicants respectfully and specifically note that while the category X document (JPA 10272370) discusses a water softening system, there is no disclosure at all of controlling the flow of incoming untreated water to each of the first and second water softeners as is specifically required in the application.

Applicants respectfully request that the examiner consider the enclosed prior art reference materials in the examination of this application.

No fees are deemed necessary for the submission of this Information Disclosure Statement, as it is being filed before a first office action in this Application. However, if any fees are necessary in connection with the filing of this Information Disclosure Statement, please debit our Deposit Account No. 13-4550.

The citation of this information does not constitute a waiver or admission of priority or that any cited item is available as a reference, or a waiver of any right under applicable statutes, codes, rules, or otherwise.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Date: January 30, 2002